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Two amputees defy odds, to compete in Xtreme Moto category in Raid de Himalaya

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In a global first, two amputees will compete on motorbikes in the world's highest cross-country rally, the Raid de Himalaya, this year. Setting this global record are Mumbai's Vinod Rawat and Nagpur's Ashok Munne.

The Raid is considered among the toughest rallies of the world. It will take off from Leh on October 8 and finish on October 14. Over 200 competitors participating in Raid de Himalaya will race over some of the most challenging roads in the Kargil, Zaskar and Ladakh sectors, speeding over rocks, gravel and dust. Rawat and Munne are competing in the toughest category — Xtreme Moto. Racing motorcycles on

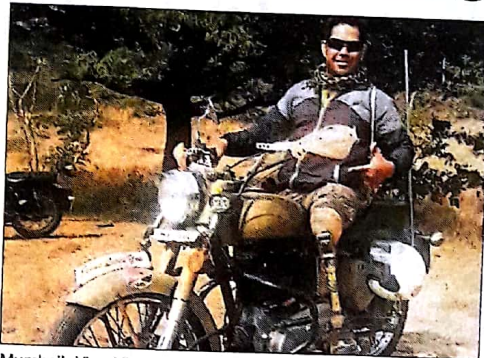
high-altitude roads and mountain passes is a task only the fittest and most determined can accomplish.

Munne is a para-athlete whose achievements can dazzle any able-bodied individual. The 34-year-old is a mountaineer, an expert in paragliding, a scuba diver, a marathon runner, a black belt in martial arts, a skilled gymnast, a kayaker, a yoga expert and an ace swimmer.

Munne climbed the Mount Everest in 2016 and is planning to repeat the feat in 2019. He lost his right leg in a train accident in 2008 but didn't let the handicap limit his life. His current target is to finish the Raid de Himalaya.

"I was 24 when I lost my leg in a train mishap," Munne said. "People said my life was

BLADE RIDERS



Mumbai's Vinod Rawat (above) and Nagpur's Ashok Munne will participate in arguably the toughest category of Raid de Himalaya.

over. I proved to them that I can and will do everything in life. There is no physical

limitation. I will live my life the way I want to." Munne, who uses a blade



"People said my life was over. I proved to them that I can and will do everything in life. I will live my life the way I want to." Ashok Munne

leg, is the brand ambassador for two multi-national artificial limbs companies.

He climbed the Mera Peak in Nepal, at a height of 6476 metres, without oxygen. In 2013, he drove 3,000 kilometres through Ladakh on his motorcycle.

"Now everything is a surprise in life. Everything is a new joy. It feels so wonderful that I am competing in the Raid this year. I had never thought I would live such an exciting life," said Munne.

Rawat has lived the Raid dream in his head for eight years. His left leg was amputated when he was child. He got his driving licence in 2000, and has been an avid motorcyclist since. "I came to know about the Raid in 2010. Since then, it has been my most cherished dream to compete at the Raid and finish it," he said. — PTI